



November 12, 2013

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman
Budget Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Ryan and Budget Conference Vice-Chair Murray:

As members of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC), a coalition of public interest groups representing millions of cancer researchers, patients, survivors and their families throughout the nation, we urge you to work together to end sequestration and reach a budget agreement that provides the investments in medical research, prevention, and other programs essential to the fight against cancer.

Under sequestration, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was cut by more than \$1.5 billion in FY 2013, including more than \$250 million in cuts to cancer research. As a result, the number of new research grants funded by the NIH fell to its lowest level since FY 1998, patient enrollment in clinical trials at the NIH clinical center was reduced from the previous year, and research projects that were funded were cut and forced to scale back their scope of work. The impact of these cuts and reductions in research is that progress is slowing down at a time when the scientific advances have never been more promising, putting potentially lifesaving treatments further out of reach for cancer patients who desperately need them.

It is also important to note that sequestration has forced the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to cut support for every state in the country, meaning that Americans have less access to life-saving cancer screenings and increased health care costs in the long run. Under sequestration, it is estimated that 24,000 fewer breast and cervical cancer screenings will be offered to medically underserved women. States are also losing critical control funds that support important outreach and education initiatives for prostate, gynecologic, skin and other cancers. States rely heavily on cancer prevention and control funding from the CDC. If the cuts continue, states will be forced to eliminate efforts that have been proven to save lives.

Additionally, we are very concerned that the existing shortage of oncology nurses is worsening due to sequestration. Oncology nurses are the linchpin that ensures patients receive quality care. They also play an essential role in supporting clinical trials. The cuts being experienced by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Title VIII nursing programs puts the nursing workforce at risk.

Lastly, OVAC is concerned that the work of the Food and Drug Administration is being unnecessarily delayed by sequestration. It is already well established that the agency is underfunded and challenged to keep up with inspections and the review of new applications. Sequestration only exacerbates these problems.

OVAC members appreciate the challenges Congress has faced over the past few years in balancing budget priorities and reducing our nation's deficit. The budget conference is as much about setting priorities for our country as it is anything else. Given that, each year, more than 1.6 million Americans are diagnosed with cancer, 580,000 die from the disease, and cancer costs our economy an excess of \$200 billion, fighting cancer must be a top priority. We urge you to work together to reach an agreement that provides the investments necessary to achieve the progress we are so capable of if adequately resourced. The members of OVAC stand ready to work with you to support this effort.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy
Alliance for Prostate Cancer Prevention
American Academy of Dermatology
Association
American Association for Cancer Research
American Cancer Society Cancer Action
Network
American College of Surgeons Commission
on Cancer
American Social Health Association
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Radiation Oncology
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health
Forum
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Association of Community Cancer Centers
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
Cancer Support Community
Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer
Research
Colon Cancer Alliance
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing
Stomach Cancer
Esophageal Cancer Action Network
Fight Colorectal Cancer
Friends of Cancer Research
Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus
International Myeloma Foundation

LIVESTRONG Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Malecare Prostate Cancer Support
Men's Health Network
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation
The MPN Research Foundation
National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer
Coalitions
National Association of Chronic Disease
Directors
National Brain Tumor Society
National Cervical Cancer Coalition
National Coalition for Cancer Research
(NCCR)
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Preventing Colorectal Cancer
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
St. Baldrick's Foundation
Susan G. Komen Advocacy Alliance
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer
Education and Support Network